

Evaluate every item below before committing to purchase. For remote purchases, send a wither tracing + photos to David Solum — davidsolumsales@gmail.com. David Solum has 40+ years evaluating western saddles. He will give you an honest, no-pressure assessment.

SADDLE INFORMATION

Maker / Brand: _____

Model: _____

Seat Size: _____

Tree Width: _____

Asking Price: _____

Year / Age (approx.): _____

1. TREE INTEGRITY (CRITICAL — DO THIS FIRST)

- Grip test passed**
Hold pommel with both hands. Push/pull forward-back and
- Twist test passed**
Opposing rotation — pommel forward, cantle toward you. Completely
- Flex test passed**
Saddle pommel-down on flat surface. Press cantle firmly. No give, no
- Sound test passed**
Knuckle-tap entire underside of both bars. Consistent solid sound
- Ground seat firm**
Press seat behind the fork. No flex, no soft spot at fork junction.
- Leather lies flat on tree**
No bubbling, rippling, or separation indicating tree movement.

2. LEATHER CONDITION

- No cracks in load-bearing leather**
Check fender tops, rigging, latigo keeper, cinch rings, back of
- Stitching intact on all seams**
Cantle binding, seat jockey, fender attachment points, skirt
- Hardware secure and functional**
D-rings, rigging dees, concho screws — nothing loose or corroded
- Stirrup leathers sound**
No cracks at fold points. Buckle tongues seated correctly.
- Cinch rings clean, round, no flat spots**

3. PANELS & FLOCKING

- Panels even — left and right match**
Run hand along both panels. No hard lumps, no flat/collapsed areas,
- No hard spots within panel**
- Gullet channel clear — no panel bulge into channel**

YOUR MEASUREMENTS (FILL IN BEFORE SHOPPING)

My seat size (inseam-based): _____

Horse wither type: _____

Tree width needed: _____

Horse back length (inches/cm): _____

My discipline: _____

Budget ceiling: _____

4. ON-HORSE FIT (WITH SADDLE PLACED, NO PAD)

- Gullet clears withers: 3–4 fingers**
Less than 2 fingers = too narrow. Any wither contact = stop
- Tree points sit flat on wither sides**
Not digging inward (too narrow) or angling outward below wither (too
- Saddle sits level front-to-back**
Pommel and cantle at roughly equal height. No nose-down or
- No lateral rocking**
Rock by hand side-to-side. Stable = good fit. Rocking = too wide or
- Skirt clears last rib**
Back of skirt should not extend past the last rib. Measures horse's
- Bars sit behind shoulder blade**
Front bar edge 2+ finger-widths behind scapula. Walk horse — blade

5. RIDER FIT (SIT IN THE SADDLE)

- Seat size correct**
1–2 inches clearance between thigh and front of seat jockey. Seat
- No cantle contact at lower back**
- Stirrups hang under hip naturally**
- Can follow horse's motion without gripping**

6. UNDER LOAD (RIDER IN SADDLE)

- Gullet maintains 3-finger spine clearance**
Run fingers under gullet at front, middle, and back with rider
- No saddle movement at walk and trot**
Watch from behind — saddle stays centered and level throughout

7. SWEAT PATTERN CHECK (AFTER 20 MIN RIDE)

- Even moisture across both bar contact areas**
No dry spots within the contact zone = even pressure distribution.
- Dry strip along gullet center = spine clearance confirmed**
- No wet spots at the wither = no spine/wither contact**

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

- Pass — proceed with purchase
- Fail — walk away
- Conditional — negotiate / get fitter's opinion

DAVID SOLUM — CERTIFIED USED SADDLES

40+ years evaluating western performance saddles

(417) 793-1403

davidsolumsales@gmail.com

westernsaddles.ai/tools/saddle-evaluation-checklist.pdf